

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8760

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

AMCONSUL TORONTO

UNCLAS MONTREAL 484

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: QUEBEC PREMIER LEVESQUE'S TOUR D'HORIZON

1. IN WIDE-RANGING, TWO-PAGE INTERVIEW IN MONTREAL STAR YESTERDAY, PREMIER LEVESQUE REHASHED MOST OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S AND PARTY'S POLICIES, ADMITTING AND CONCURRENTLY COMPLAINING ABOUT FREQUENT NEED TO CLARIFY THEIR POSITION.

2. PRINCIPAL POINTS WERE:

A. "SECRET POLLS" SHOW MAJORITY OF CANADIANS FAVOR ASSOCIATION WITH QUEBEC IF IT BECOMES INDEPENDENT ENTITY. NOTING "SOVERAINE-ASSOCIATION" WAS ORIGINAL NAME OF PARTY AND DUAL CONCEPT NOT NEW, STRESSED POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY IS PRIMARY BUT POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING BOTH SIMULTANEOUSLY IS NOT OUT OF QUESTION.

B. PRESIDENT CARTER'S PERSONAL PREFERENCE FOR A UNITED CANADA "WAS THE BIGGEST PIECE OF NON-NEWS THAT I SAW IN A LONG TIME BECAUSE IT'S A NORMAL PREFERENCE FOR AMERICANS..."

C. "GROUND RULES" FOR REFERENDUM MUST INCLUDE LIMITS ON NUMBER OF PARTICIPANT-GROUPS ON BOTH PRO AND CON SIDES AS WELL AS LIMITATION ON FUNDS USED TO SUPPORT SUCH VIEWPOINTS. "NOT, YOU KNOW, EVERYBODY GOING ON HIS OWN, WITH HIS OWN BUDGET. BECAUSE THEN

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YOU COULD FLOOD QUEBEC WITH ANY KIND OF MONEY WHICH WOULDN'T BE A LEGITIMATE REFERENDUM. IT COULD BE A FINANCIAL OPERATION. I DON'T THINK THAT'S DEMOCRACY."

D. NATIONAL REFERENDUM ON SUBJECT OF QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE NOT APPROPRIATE BECAUSE IT IS UP TO PEOPLE OF QUEBEC, ESPECIALLY THE 81 PERCENT FRENCH, TO DETERMINE THEIR FUTURE - BUT ON QUESTION OF ASSOCIATION, NATIONAL REFERENDUM "NOT A BAD IDEA".

E. TIMETABLE FOR REFERENDUM NOT SET BUT SOMETIME AFTER TWO YEARS AND "NOT TOO CLOSE" TO NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTION.

F. QUEBEC IS "STRAPPED" BUT THERE ISN'T MUCH LEEWAY FOR FURTHER TAXING ("ALREADY OVERTAXED") SO MUST "CUT DOWN AT LEAST THE INCREMENT OF BORROWING..."

F. PROVINCE -- WHICH HAS RECENTLY BAILED OUT TWO INDUSTRIAL PLANTS IN TROUBLE AND MUST MAKE DECISION ON ANOTHER WITHIN DAYS -- HAS TO "KEEP AWAY FROM BECOMING A SORT OF INSURANCE AGENCY FOR FAILURES IN THE PRIVATE FIELD. AND YET IT'S ALREADY TIED TO JOBS, YOU KNOW, SO ..."

G. PARTY CONVENTION RESOLUTION OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO TO "YANK US OUT OF NATO AND NORAD" MUST BE RETHOUGHT -- BUT NOT YET.

H. LANGUAGE LEGISLATION (YET TO BE TABLED) "IS BOUND TO BE EVOLUTIONARY, WITH TRANSITION PERIODS, YOU KNOW, FOR MANY THINGS AND THE ACCENT BEING PUT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ON, LET'S SAY, THE ECONOMIC ASPECT OF LANGUAGE."

I. IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS HAVE KEPT CABINET FROM MUCH CONSIDERATION OF MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM PLANNING.

3. COMMENT: FRUSTRATION OF THE PREMIER VERY CLEAR THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW. GOOD GOVERNMENT EASIER TO CAMPAIGN ON THAN PRODUCE, AS PLETHORA OF NIGGLING PROBLEMS EAT UP TIME AND ENERGY, AND CONSTANT NEED TO BACK-AND-FILL RE EITHER ILL-CHOSEN PHRASES OR, PERHAPS, TRIAL BALLOONS OF VARIOUS MINISTERS EQUALLY WEARISOME. QUEBEC'S 0125 AND 0031 ADDRESS FURTHER EXASPERATING PROBLEM OF COPING WITH SEVERAL DEMANDING CONSTITUENCIES, INSIDE AS WELL AS OUTSIDE THE PARTY. TONE OF INTERVIEW SUGGESTS COMBINATION THESE FACTORS STARTING TO TAKE TOLL.

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